

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CAB-05 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00
DOTE-00 EB-08 INR-10 NSAE-00 FAA-00 L-03 PA-02
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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 3737

UNCLAS MADRID 02503

DEPARTMENT PASS NTSB (DREYFUS)

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, US, SP
SUBJECT: SPANISH PRESS CITES BOEING ON CAUSES OF MARCH
1977 TENERIFE 747 ACCIDENT-BOEING ISSUES DISCLAIMER

REF: MADRID 2391

1. SPANISH PRESS ("YA") PUBLISHED REPORT MARCH 3,
ALLEGEDLY BASED ON INFORMATION FROM BOEING INVESTIGATORS,
TO EFFECT THAT MARCH 27, 1977 PAN AM-KLM DISASTER AT
TENERIFE, CANARY ISLANDS, WAS RESULT OF FACT THAT KLM
PILOT WAS IN TOILET AND CO-PILOT'S POOR UNDERSTANDING
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE LED HIM TO INITIATE TAKEOFF BEFORE
OBTAINING TOWER CLEARANCE. BOEING HAS ISSUED DENIAL.

2. ACCORDING TO STORY, KLM PILOT'S WIFE REPORTED THAT
HE SUFFERED FROM "RELATIVELY HIGH BLOOD SUGAR CONTENT",
THOUGH NOT DIABETES, WHICH MADE FREQUENT URINATION
NECESSARY. ON DAY OF ACCIDENT PILOT WAS EXTREMELY
BUSY AND IN RELATIVELY HIGH STATE OF TENSION DUE TO
INITIAL DIVERSION OF FLIGHT TO TENERIFE AND PRESSURES
TO REFUEL AND TAKE OFF AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. AS RESULT,
REPORT CONTINUES, PILOT WENT TO CREW TOILET JUST BEHIND
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CABIN WHILE WAITING FOR CLEARANCE TO TAKE OFF, LEAVING
AIRCRAFT UNDER CONTROL OF CO-PILOT WHOSE "UNDERSTANDING
OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE WAS INSUFFICIENT." LATTER ALLEGEDLY
BEGAN TAKEOFF IN ERROR, AT WHICH TIME PILOT RUSHED BACK
TO CONTROLS AND, UPON SEEING PANAM AIRCRAFT ON RUNWAY,
MADE VAIN ATTEMPT TO PULL UP OVER IT TO AVOID COLLISION.

3. MARCH 7 ISSUE OF "YA" CARRIES EXCERPTS FROM LETTER ISSUED BY BOEING COMPANY, SEATTLE, ON MARCH 3 IN WHICH FIRM DENIES THAT ANY BOEING EMPLOYEE HAD CONFIRMED POINTS IN PRESS STORY. BOEING FURTHER NOTED THAT NONE OF THEIR EMPLOYEES INVOLVED IN, OR ASSOCIATED WITH, ANY AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION WOULD MAKE COMMENTS, "PUBLIC OR EXTRANEOUS" DURING AN INVESTIGATION.

4. COMMENT: SPANISH CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITIES TOLD EMBOFF ON MARCH 2 THAT THEY HOPED TO COMPLETE TECHNICAL REPORT ON TENERIFE ACCIDENT "IN NEAR FUTURE". MOST RECENT IBERIA ACCIDENT (REFTEL) WILL PROBABLY INTRODUCE ADDITIONAL DELAY, AS MANY OF SAME OFFICIALS ARE INVOLVED IN BOTH CASES. STABLER

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Message Attributes

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Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
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